

**Manuscript version: Author's Accepted Manuscript**

The version presented in WRAP is the author's accepted manuscript and may differ from the published version or Version of Record.

**Persistent WRAP URL:**

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/118206>

**How to cite:**

Please refer to published version for the most recent bibliographic citation information. If a published version is known of, the repository item page linked to above, will contain details on accessing it.

**Copyright and reuse:**

The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes this work by researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions.

Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

**Publisher's statement:**

Please refer to the repository item page, publisher's statement section, for further information.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: [wrap@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:wrap@warwick.ac.uk).

Submission ID Number:	<b>CIST-2019-0038</b> <b>For special issue entitled ‘Sa‘di in Europe’.</b>
Journal:	<i>Iranian Studies</i> , vol. 52 / 2019
Date:	Submission date: January 31, 2019 Last updated: May 12, 2019 Final Editorial Approval: May 19, 2019
Final Version for Copy Edits and Production	Approved by Editor-in-Chief: May 19, 2019
Author:	<b>Julia Caterina Hartley</b>
Essay Title:	<b>Beyond Orientalism: When Marceline Desbordes-Valmore carried Sa‘di’s Roses to France</b>
Contact Information:	<a href="mailto:julia.hartley@warwick.ac.uk">julia.hartley@warwick.ac.uk</a>
Bio note:	Julia Caterina Hartley is Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the School of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Warwick, UK.
Acknowledgements:	
Bibliography	Bibliography included at the end of the text.
Abstract and Keywords:	Please see below.
Figures	

Julia Caterina Hartley

## Beyond Orientalism: When Marceline Desbordes-Valmore carried Sa'di's Roses to France

### Abstract:

*The present article follows a thread of translation and intertextual dialogue, taking us from the thirteenth-century Persian poet Sa'di to the nineteenth-century French poet Marceline Desbordes-Valmore. It reads Desbordes-Valmore's poem 'Les roses de Saadi' (1860) with the two passages from Sa'di's Golestān from which it was inspired, shedding new light on the poem's metapoetic subtext. The original Persian text is compared to two French translations that were circulating at the time when Desbordes-Valmore was writing. This analysis of the Golestān's reception forms the basis for the argument that Desbordes-Valmore recast in secular terms Sa'di's discourse on poetic language, emphasizing the continuity, rather than difference, between her concerns and Sa'di's. The case of Desbordes-Valmore thus reveals a forgotten facet of nineteenth-century French engagements with Middle-Eastern culture: one of identification and literary influence, which existed alongside the processes of "othering" for which the period is better known.*

### Keywords:

Sa'di; Desbordes-Valmore; Orientalism; poetry; translation; reception; metaphor; gender.

### Introduction

This article offers a new reading of Marceline Desbordes-Valmore's poem "Les roses de Saadi" (1860) by interpreting it in light of the preface of Sa'di's *Golestān* and the French translations through which Desbordes-Valmore would have had access to Sa'di's work. The case of "Les roses de Saadi" brings to light the role played by translation in transforming France's vision of Persia (in French "la Perse"), from distant land to specific body of texts, i.e. Persian literature. Indeed, Desbordes-Valmore's poem engages intertextually with the preface of the *Golestān* and does not seek to exoticise this Persian source. I will argue that Desbordes-Valmore's lyric I identifies with the medieval Persian poet's lyric I, placing an emphasis on their similarities, rather than differences, and reworking Sa'di's most famous metaphor (the rose as language, and in particular poetic language) for a modern secular audience. This has important implications both for our understanding of the gendered nature of the nineteenth-century French poetic canon, as well as for our understanding of French Orientalism, in this article understood as nineteenth-century academic knowledge of Middle-Eastern literature, its dissemination through translation, and the impact of this dissemination on French poetry.

Before examining Desbordes-Valmore's poem, it is important to consider how her case fits into academic debates on the European representation of the Orient. The foundational text on the subject is Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). Said argued that in French nineteenth-century culture the so-called Orient — which Said by and large takes to refer to the Islamic Middle-East — was constructed as Europe's ultimate "other". To *orientalize*, in Said's definition, is to apprehend the

Orient not as an empirical geographic location (as in the Asian continent), but as Europe's self-crafted ontological opposite. The Orient in this sense is a European fabrication rather than a reality, and indeed the "real" place rarely lived up to the fantasy.<sup>1</sup> The examples cited in *Orientalism* are mainly taken from French and British nineteenth-century travel literature and serve to highlight the widespread representation of "Orientals" in opposition to Europeans with emphasis on the latter's superiority: the European is civilised, uses reason, and is masculine, active, and progressive, the "Oriental" is barbaric, driven by brute passion, effeminate, passive, stuck in the past. According to Said, the relationship between Occident and Orient in the literature of this period is thus irrevocably hierarchical and this portrayal ultimately served to promote colonial ambitions.

In the thirty years since its publication, *Orientalism* has come under criticism for its generalisations, which tend to ignore historical context (for instance Dante, Aeschylus and Ernest Renan are described as equally racist), and the indiscriminate grouping together of scholars, literary authors, and political agents.<sup>2</sup> In my view, Said did accurately describe a trope that is present in many nineteenth-century European texts, that is, the Orient as exotic — and frequently erotic — fantasy, but there have historically also been other ways in which European writers have engaged with Asian sources. Indeed, when we read early academic studies of Asian languages and civilisations, and the literature and art that this scholarship inspired, we are often faced with a mix of myth and fact, Eurocentric bias and cultural relativism, second-hand clichés and original research. Doing justice to these paradoxes requires a great level of nuance. Fortunately, in the past years there has been a rise in scholarship that seeks to do justice to the complexity of Europe's long-standing fascination with the Middle-East.

The space for approaches such as my own in this article has been opened in particular by Jennifer Yee's *The Colonial Comedy* (2016) and Alexander Bevilacqua's intellectual history *The Republic of Arabic Letters* (2018). Yee has made a case against the assumption that French nineteenth-century writers were complicit with colonialism by examining the ways in which French realist novels used 'literary devices such as pastiche, parody, and narrative framing' to critique imperialism and exoticism.<sup>3</sup> Bevilacqua brings to life the largely forgotten community of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European scholars of Arabic and Islam, doing justice to the ambivalence of their motivations and the resulting accounts of the Muslim world. Both these scholars bring a new level of nuance to the territory covered by Said, showing in particular that critiques of the "Orientalism" described by Said already existed in the colonial era (Yee) and that European scholars have a history not only of othering, but also of identifying with the Muslim world (Bevilacqua).<sup>4</sup> It should moreover be noted that European interest in Iran is a rich phenomenon with its own history and therefore deserves analysis in its own right, independently from other Orients: this is what Hamid Dabashi has termed "Persophilia", in order to differentiate it from the broader umbrella of "Orientalism".<sup>5</sup> Finally, the poem "Les roses de Saadi" itself has been

---

<sup>1</sup> Said for instance cites the telling example of a letter from Gérard de Nerval to Théophile Gautier, in which Nerval bemoans having replaced his fantasies of the Orient with memories of the Orient. Said, *Orientalism*, 100.

<sup>2</sup> See in particular Irwin, "An Enquiry into the Nature of a Certain Twentieth-Century Polemic".

<sup>3</sup> Yee, *The Colonial Comedy*, 114.

<sup>4</sup> Srinivas Aravamudan in his study of the Orient in French and British eighteenth-century fiction also shows that the Middle East was often seen as a source of "culture, wisdom, precedence, and even enlightenment" (*Enlightenment Orientalism*, 9). However he sets the eighteenth century as a foil to the nineteenth century, suggesting that these positive treatments of the Orient were necessarily "confused, vague, and highly distorted" and could only take place before the colonial era (*Ibid.* 9). This article demonstrates instead that positive treatments could be based on a closer knowledge of Middle-Eastern sources and be written by authors living in the colonial era.

<sup>5</sup> Dabashi, *Persophilia*, 14-15. Indeed, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European treatments of Persia have generated a number of studies, including Bonnerot, *La Perse dans la littérature et la*

interpreted by Adrianna Paliyenko as evidence that nineteenth-century French poets such as Desbordes-Valmore inhabited “a multicultural context enriched by the literature of ancient Persia”.<sup>6</sup>

My reading of Desbordes-Valmore is most germane with the paradigms developed in Goethe Studies. Goethe scholars have argued that in his collection of poems entitled *West-östlicher Divan* (1820) Goethe both imitates the manner of Persian poets and maintains his own voice, creating as a result a poetic space beyond the cultural demarcations of “East” and “West”.<sup>7</sup> Most importantly, Goethe scholar Anil Bhatti has collaborated with culture theorist Dorothee Kimmich to make a case against the preponderance of the paradigm of difference in studies of intercultural encounters, suggesting we activate the more flexible paradigm of similarity (*Similarity: A Paradigm for Culture Theory*, 2018). According to Bhatti and Kimmich, similarity takes us beyond the oppositional paradigms of “us versus them” or “same versus other”, allowing us to apprehend the more complex realities of “both/and”, in other words, the coexistence of commonality and difference. It is precisely Bhatti and Kimmich’s open and non-binary perspective that I have sought to emulate here. This article acknowledges the cultural context in which Desbordes-Valmore read Sa’di, which was one in which the Orient was predominantly described in terms of difference, which had strong political implications as shown by Said. At the same time, the article also reveals the intertextuality between Desbordes-Valmore’s poem and Sa’di’s *Golestān* and argues that she chose to highlight the continuities between her poetry and Sa’di’s, rather than the differences. Her Orientalism is informed by a specific Persian work as opposed to a European-made fantasy. The richness and nuance of this Sa’di-inspired European poem thus cannot be accounted for in terms of Said’s stringent paradigm. In order to reach my conclusions, I will begin by examining under what auspices Desbordes-Valmore would have read Sa’di. This focused reception history will then serve as the basis for my interpretation of Desbordes-Valmore’s poem. I will end by considering the implications of Desbordes-Valmore’s engagement with Sa’di in light of the gendered policing of the French poetic canon in the nineteenth century and suggest how this may intersect with the question of Orientalism.

#### *Desbordes-Valmore Reads Sa’di*

The presence of Persian literature in French nineteenth-century literary culture is defined by two aspects. First, a boom in translations, since over the course of only a few decades French speakers went from only having access to partial translations of Sa’di’s *Golestān* to being able to read complete translations of the majority of canonical Persian literature.<sup>8</sup> This meant that for the first time Iran or, as it was most often referred to then, Persia (“la Perse”), went from being

---

*pensée française au XVIIIe siècle*; Gail, *Persia and the Victorians*; Maillard and Tafazoli, *Persien im Spiegel Deutschlands*; and Tafazoli, *Der deutsche Persien-Diskurs*.

<sup>6</sup> Paliyenko, “Between Poetic Cultures: Ancient Sources of the Asian ‘Orient’ in Marceline Desbordes-Valmore and Louise Ackermann”, 25.

<sup>7</sup> See “Goethe et l’Orient : Le divan occidental-Oriental”, special issue of *Études germaniques* 60:2 (2005), in particular Jürgen Doll and Roland Krebs, “Une réception productive”, 227-9; Anke Bosse, “Interkulturelle Balance statt ‘clash of cultures’. Zue Goethese *West-östlichem Divan*”, 231-48; Leo Kreutzer, “Goethes *West-östlicher Divan* Projekt eines anderen Orientalismus”, 249-64; Bhatti, “... ‘Zwischen zwei Welten schwebend’ .... Zu Goethes Fremdheitsexperiment im *West-Östlichen Divan*”; Tafazoli, “Heterotopie als Entwurf poetischer Raumgestaltung”. Said dismissed the *Divan* as a “protective Orientalized Orient” (Said, *Orientalism*, 155).

<sup>8</sup> Javād Hadidi, “Peydāyesh va gostāresh Irānshenāsi”, in *Az Sa’di be Aragon: ta’sir-e adabi’āt-e fārsi dar adabi’āt-e farāns*, 214-47. An overview of French translations of Persian literature can also be found in the preface to Shoja’eddin Shafā’s anthology of French poems *Irān dar asār-ha-ye she’r-i farānseh*, published as the first volume of a series entitled *Irān dar adabi’āt-e jahān* (*Iran in World Literature*).

predominantly associated with the strong impression of exoticism that had been left by Mohammad Reza Beg's ambassadorial visit to Louis XIV's Versailles in 1715 which had inspired works such as Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* (1721), to being associated for the first time with a specific body of literary texts.<sup>9</sup> This translation movement allowed Persia to evolve from distant geographic location to literary world available at home. Since this literary world had hitherto been unavailable, it was met with enthusiasm by French writers, most notably members of the Romantic movement who saw "Oriental poetry" (as it was then known) as a welcome alternative to Ancient Greek and Roman literature, which was then being emulated by the French Classicists. One could thus argue that during the nineteenth century we witness a shift from a noun to an adjective: from "la Perse" (*Persia*) to "la littérature persane" (*Persian literature*).<sup>10</sup>

A second important feature were the regular exchanges between academic Orientalists and the literary figures of the day. Chateaubriand was a member of the Société Asiatique, even though he was not a scholar of Oriental languages. Victor Hugo and Sainte-Beuve were regulars at the salon hosted by Mary Clarke, the wife of Jules Mohl, the eminent Persianist who translated the *Shāhnāme* and was for many years the president of the Société Asiatique: this salon brought into regular contact many Orientalists, politicians, and writers.<sup>11</sup> Hugo's often cited observation that the Orient had become "une sorte de préoccupation générale" (*a sort of general preoccupation*) indeed followed directly from his praise for academic research: "Les études orientales n'ont jamais été poussées si avant. [...] Nous avons aujourd'hui un savant cantonné dans chacun des idiomes de l'Orient, depuis la Chine jusqu'à l'Égypte" (*Never before have Oriental Studies been so advanced. [...] Today we have a regional expert for every Oriental language, from China all the way to Egypt.*)<sup>12</sup> Hugo's emphasis on the study of languages stemmed from his enthusiasm for the poetry that was being translated into French for the first time.<sup>13</sup>

It would be an exaggeration to claim that the newfound availability of French translations of Persian poetry automatically led to the French perspective on Iran becoming entirely free of clichés. However, these translations helped further a more meaningful type of engagement with Iranian culture and also for an emphasis on the genius and talent of Persian poets. Though it may seem tokenistic by today's standards, Victor Hugo's inclusion of quotations from Sa'di and Hafez alongside quotations from Dante, Shakespeare, and Virgil in *Les Orientales* (1829) promoted a non-nationalistic and non-Eurocentric perspective on literature. Indeed, he suggested in the collection's preface that Europeans were mistaken to assume that the people of Asia were inherently inferior to them.<sup>14</sup> Despite vehement criticism and some negative reviews, Hugo's collection was a success

<sup>9</sup> On the representation of "Persia" in eighteenth-century French literature see Bonnerot, *La Perse dans la littérature et la pensée françaises au XVIIIe siècle*.

<sup>10</sup> A concise overview of French familiarity with Persian literature in the second half of the nineteenth century is offered by Barbier de Meynard's *La Poésie en Perse: Leçon d'ouverture faite au Collège de France, le 4 décembre 1876*, which uses the terms "la littérature persane" (*Persian literature*), "l'épopée persane" (*Persian epic*), and "la poésie persane" (*Persian poetry*).

<sup>11</sup> Schwab, *La Renaissance orientale*, 89-92 and 334-38.

<sup>12</sup> Hugo, *Les Orientales*, ix.

<sup>13</sup> On Hugo's sources see Larcher, "Autour des *Orientales*: Victor Hugo, Ernest Fouinet et la Poésie arabe archaïque".

<sup>14</sup> "La vieille barbarie asiatique n'est peut-être pas aussi dépourvue d'hommes supérieurs que notre civilisation le veut croire" (Hugo, *Les Orientales*, xi.) The terms "barbarie" and "civilisation" seem to be used here to pastiche the language of Hugo's detractors. Indeed, the collection was attacked in precisely these terms, see for instance E. J. Chételat's claim that by writing poetry inspired by the Orient, Hugo was exposing French genius to barbaric influences. *Les Occidentales ou Lettres critiques sur les Orientales de M. Victor Hugo*, 5-7.

with the public and he became considered one of the disseminators of Middle-Eastern poetry, even though ironically he did not know any Persian or Arabic.<sup>15</sup>

Hugo's enthusiasm for Oriental poetry is foreshadowed by Sir William Jones's "Traité sur la poesie Orientale" (1770), which would become famous in its English version "On the Poetry of the Eastern Nations" (1772). In the original French version, which was available to French writers such as Hugo since a copy was held at the Bibliothèque Royale in Paris, Jones writes: "Il est à la vérité surprenant que la poésie Européenne ait subsisté si long-tems avec la perpétuelle répétition des mêmes images, & les continuélles allusions aux mêmes fables".<sup>16</sup> (*It is in fact surprising that European poetry should have survived so long despite its perpetual repetition of the same images, and continual allusions to the same tales.*) Jones then observes that if the effort were made to publish Oriental literature in editions with "notes & explications" and if Oriental languages were taught across European universities, then: "nous pénétrerions plus avant dans l'histoire du coeur humain; notre esprit seroit pourvû d'un nouvel assortiment d'images & de comparaisons; en conséquence en on verroit paroître plusieurs excellentes compositions".<sup>17</sup> (*We would penetrate deeper into the history of the human heart, our mind would be provided with a new assortment of images and similes, and as a consequence excellent new compositions would be published.*) The term "human heart" is important here, since it suggests that European and Oriental poetry should be viewed collectively as sharing a common interest with human emotion.

Another key international figure for the promotion of Persian poetry in France was Goethe, whose *West-östlicher Divan* predates Hugo's *Orientales* by nine years. Goethe continued to be perceived as a mediator between medieval Persian poetry and European poetry well into the nineteenth-century, as we can tell from the prefatory poem to Théophile Gautier's *Émaux et Camées* (1852). In this sonnet, Gautier's lyric I announces that he will follow the example of Goethe, who wrote his *Divan* by leaving Shakespeare for Nezāmi ("Pour Nisami quittant Shakspeare"), using a "mètre oriental", and forgetting Weimar as he plucked Hāfez's roses ("A Weimar s'isolait des choses / Et d'Hafiz effeuillait les roses").<sup>18</sup> Gautier's choice of Shakespeare as the literary figure being supplanted by Nezāmi is significant, since Shakespeare had been the French Romantics' most important exemplary figure.<sup>19</sup> Gautier's verses imply that in the mid-nineteenth century, Persian poetry was still perceived as a tradition which had something new to offer to European poetry – something newer even than Shakespeare. It is also striking that although Gautier names Hāfez, the image of the pages of a work of literature being "roses" is taken from the *Golestān*. Reading between the lines, the poem thus calls upon three Persian poets: the epic poet Nezāmi, the lyric poet Hāfez, and the didactic poet Sa'di, a sign of European readers' growing familiarity with the Persian literary canon. At the same time, the poem also exoticizes these poets, who are portrayed as offering the nineteenth-century French poet a form of escapism. French poetry's engagement with Persian sources continued well into the end of the century, as exemplified by the minor Parnassian poet Jean Lahor's collection *Les Quatrains d'Al-Ghazali* (1896) which was inspired by Al-Ghazali's *al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*, which he read in a French translation from

---

<sup>15</sup> On the critical reception of *Les Orientales* see Sandrine Raffin, "Les Orientales. La Réception critique en 1829". Pierre Larcher has pointed out that Michelet in his *Histoire de France* cites a translation of a Rumi ghazal that first appeared in the notes to Hugo's *Orientales*, thanking Hugo and his translator (Ernest Fouinet) for introducing the French public to this poetry. (Hugo did not know Arabic or Persian, all translations and commentaries appearing in his notes were quoted or plagiarised from Fouinet's letters.) Larcher, "Autour des *Orientales*: Victor Hugo, Ernest Fouinet et la Poésie arabe archaïque", 82.

<sup>16</sup> William Jones, "Traité sur la poesie Orientale", 246.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Gautier, "Préface", in *Émaux et Camées*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> The two key manifestos are Stendhal's essay *Racine et Shakespeare* (1823) and Hugo's preface to *Cromwell* (1827).

1842, and Khayyam's *Robayiat*, which he read in Edward FitzGerald's English translation in verse (1859) and Jean-Baptiste Nicolas's more faithful French prose translation (1867). In the following year, André Gide published *Les Nourritures terrestres* (1897), which was also inspired by Persian poetry, though this was less overtly manifest since in contrast to Lahor who wrote quatrains, Gide did not engage in formal imitation.<sup>20</sup>

In comparison to the explicitly Oriental poems of Goethe, Hugo or Lahor, the poem that I will be examining in this article will seem very unassuming. Indeed, the only sign that Desbordes-Valmore's poem has anything to do with the Orient is the reference to Sa'di in its title. If the debt of "Les roses de Saadi" to Persian literature is less obvious, this is because, as I will show, rather than mimicking the themes and formulas that the French public would have associated with Oriental poetry, Desbordes-Valmore chooses to explore a metaphor used by Sa'di. As a result, we can speak here of a case of intertextuality, in which Desbordes-Valmore calls upon Sa'di as a fellow poet, rather than as a source of local colour.

"Les roses de Saadi"

J'ai voulu ce matin te rapporter des roses;  
Mais j'en avais tant pris dans mes ceintures closes  
Que les nœuds trop serrés n'ont pu les contenir.

Les nœuds ont éclaté. Les roses envolées  
Dans le vent, à la mer s'en sont allées.  
Elles ont suivi l'eau pour ne plus revenir;

La vague en a paru rouge et comme enflammée.  
Ce soir, ma robe encore en est tout embaumée...  
Respires-en sur moi l'odorant souvenir.

("Saadi's roses")

*This morning I wanted to bring you back some roses;  
But I had gathered so many inside my closed belts  
That the tightly fastened knots were not able to contain them.*

*The knots burst. The roses carried off  
By the wind went away to sea.  
They followed the water to no longer come back;*

*The wave seemed to turn red from them, as if on fire.  
This evening, my dress is still full of their perfume...  
Breathe in from me their fragrant memory.)<sup>21</sup>*

It has been established that these verses were inspired by the preface of the *Golestān* thanks to a letter dated 22 February 1848. Addressing Charles Augustin de Sainte-Beuve, Desbordes-Valmore writes: "Voici ce que je pourrais vous dire, véritable Saadi de nos climats: 'j'avais dessein de vous rapporter des roses; mais j'ai été tellement enivrée de leur odeur délicieuse qu'elles ont

<sup>20</sup> On Lahor and Gide's sources, see Karim Hayati Ashtiani's PhD dissertation "Les relations littéraires entre la France et la Perse de 1829 à 1897". Université Lumière Lyon II, 2004.

<sup>21</sup> Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, *Les Oeuvres poétiques*, II, 509. Poem first published in the collection *Poésies inédites* (1860). Unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own.



toutes échappé de mon sein.” (“*This is what I might say to you, veritable Sa’di of our climes: ‘My design was to bring you some roses; but I was so intoxicated by their delicious smell that they all escaped from my breast’*”).<sup>22</sup> The passage to which Desbordes-Valmore alludes reads as follows in the original:

یکی از صاحب‌دلان سر به جیب مراقبت فرو برده بود و در بحر مکاشفت مستغرق شده حالی که از این معامله باز آمد یکی از دوستان گفت از این بوستان که بودی ما را چه تحفه کرامت کردی گفت به خاطر داشتم که چون به درخت گل رسم دامنی پر کنم هدیه اصحاب را چون برسیدم بوی گلم چنان مست کرد که دامنم از دست برفت.

(*One of the wise men had bowed his head into the collar of meditation and was immersed in the sea of divine contemplation. When he came back to himself, one of his friends asked: “From this garden where you were, what generous gift have you brought us?” He replied: “It was my intention upon arriving at the rose tree to fill the skirts of my robe with a present for my companions. But when I arrived I was so intoxicated by the smell of the roses that my skirt slipped from my hands.”*)<sup>23</sup>

Desbordes-Valmore’s wording in her letter to Sainte-Beuve suggests that she was citing the Abbé Gaudin’s translation of the *Golestān*, first published in 1789 and reprinted as part of the *Panthéon Littéraire* omnibus collection in 1838.<sup>24</sup> Gaudin’s translation was a translation by relay, based on Gentius’s 1651 Latin translation, and by the time it was republished in the *Panthéon Littéraire* it had been established that it had many flaws. Loiseleur Deslongchamps, the editor of the *Panthéon Littéraire* volume, acknowledges that Gaudin could not read Persian and that a new translation by Sémelet (1834) was far more accurate. Yet he defends the choice of Gaudin’s translation over Sémelet’s by arguing that “la lecture de ce livre est bien loin d’offrir le charme des traductions beaucoup plus libres dans lesquelles on a fait quelques concessions au goût européen” (“*this book [i.e. Sémelet’s translation] is far from offering its readers the charm of the much freer translations in which some concessions have been made to European taste*”).<sup>25</sup> There is a great irony in the fact that the volume’s frontispiece claims that the works included in the anthology are “traduits des langues Orientales” (“*translated from Oriental languages*”), presumably as a selling point, but that when one reaches Sa’di, it turns out that the work is in fact translated from Latin.

The *Panthéon Littéraire* volume is thus arguably a case of Orientalism as defined by Said: the Orient is there as a seductive idea that will attract readers, hence the “langues Orientales” appearing in pride of place on the frontispiece, but when it comes to the text itself, no effort is made to engage with the source culture on its own terms. The original text is presented as too uncouth for European readers, who are, it is implied, more civilised than the “Orientals” for whom it was written.<sup>26</sup> The editor’s note maintains a clear self/other binary: on the one side we have the editor

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Spoelberch de Lovenjoul, *Sainte-Beuve inconnu*, 227. The connection between the poem and the letter was first made by A. Calder, who argues it is evidence that “Les roses de Saadi” should not be read as a love poem. I will question this claim in the article’s final section.

<sup>23</sup> Sa’di, *Golestān*, edited by Muḥammad Javad Mashkur, 3. I have translated the passage myself in order to remain as close to the Persian as possible. For a complete English translation of the *Golestān* see Edward B. Eastwick.

<sup>24</sup> Abbé Gaudin, *Essai historique sur la législation de la Perse, précédé de la Traduction complete du Jardin des Roses de Sady* (Paris: 1789); “Gulistan ou le jardin des roses, traduit du Persan de Saadi”, in “Contes Orientaux. II.”, in “Littérature Orientale”, in *Panthéon Littéraire* 135 vols (Paris: 1835-45), LVIII, 553-61. On seventeenth-century translations of Sa’di see Brancaforte, “Persian Words of Wisdom Travel to the West”.

<sup>25</sup> A. Loiseleur Deslongchamps, “Notice sur le Gulistan et sur la vie de Saadi”, *Panthéon Littéraire*, LVIII, 551-52 (551).

<sup>26</sup> The implication arises through the use of the word “délicatesse” in the same editorial note, which informs us that Gaudin “dû, pour se conformer à notre goût et à notre délicatesse, adoucir certains

and his readers, who share a “European taste” and are referred to through the pronoun “nous”; on the other side, we have the culture of the source text, whose perspective is deemed too other to be worth entertaining. Preserving the inaccurate translation is thus a way of keeping the reality of the Persian text at arm’s length, thereby avoiding disappointing French readers, whom the editor assumes prefer a European version of Persian literature. Sa‘di is only included in the anthology as a further purveyor of “contes orientaux” (“*Oriental tales*”), a genre made popular in the previous century by Antoine Galland’s *Mille et Unes Nuits* (*The Thousand and One Nights* or *Arabian Nights*).<sup>27</sup> This is indicated by the volume’s sub-titles: “Contes orientaux II. Les Mille et un jours, Contes persans [...], suivis de plusieurs autres recueils de contes” (“*Oriental tales II. The Thousand and One days, Persian tales [...], followed by several other collections of tales*”), and also by the fact that the layout of the translation presents the *Golestān* as a prose text, when in fact it is a prosimetrum, that is, a literary work alternating prose and verse.

This, then, is the context in which Desbordes-Valmore would have first encountered Sa‘di’s parable of the sage and the roses. The translation reads as follows:

Un d’entre eux, la tête baissée sur son sein et plongé dans une méditation profonde, se livrait à la contemplation de ses perfections divines; un ami l’aborda et lui dit en riant: vous sortez d’un jardin délicieux, nous apportez-vous quelque présent agréable? — Mon dessein, répondit-il, était bien de vous apporter des roses; mais j’ai été tellement enivré de leur odeur délicieuse qu’elles ont toutes échappé de mon sein.

(One of them, who with his head faced down to his breast was plunged in a deep meditation, was devoting himself to the contemplation of the divine perfections; a friend approached him and said laughing: you come from a delicious garden, have you brought us a pleasant gift? — My design, he answered, was indeed to bring you some roses; but I was so intoxicated by their delicious smell that they all escaped from my breast.)<sup>28</sup>

The reference to a “sein” (breast) rather than a skirt, as per the original “*dāman*”, seems convincing evidence that at the time of writing to Sainte-Beuve, Desbordes-Valmore was familiar with this early translation.<sup>29</sup> However, it is my contention that between writing the letter to Sainte-Beuve and writing “Les roses de Saadi”, Desbordes-Valmore must have consulted the 1834 translation of the *Golestān* by Sémelet, of which she would have been made aware by the *Panthéon Littéraire* editor’s forward, which I quoted above.<sup>30</sup>

Sémelet’s translation was the first complete “literal” translation of the *Golestān* into French and was aimed specifically at students of Persian. I put the word literal in inverted commas because, as has been eloquently argued by David Bellos among others, there is no such thing as a literal translation and Sémelet himself acknowledges this in his preface.<sup>31</sup> When Sémelet and the editor

---

passages et en supprimer même quelques-uns” (“*had to, in order to conform to our taste and our sensitivity, soften certain passages and even entirely remove others*”). A. Loiseleur Deslongchamps, “*Notice sur le Gulistan et sur la vie de Saadi*”, 551.

<sup>27</sup> See Perrin, *L'Orientale allégorie*.

<sup>28</sup> *Panthéon Littéraire*, LVIII, 554. The passage appears on page xxiii of Gaudin’s first edition (1789).

<sup>29</sup> The word “*dāman*” can be translated as either skirt or lap, and the two meanings of the word are in fact close given that when sitting, a skirt falls across one’s lap. Because the passage clearly states that the “*dāman*” slips from the sage’s hand, it seems clear that Sa‘di intended the word to be understood as skirt.

<sup>30</sup> Sémelet’s translation, dedicated to Louis-Philippe, was available for consultation at the Bibliothèque Royale.

<sup>31</sup> David Bellos, “Fictions of the Foreign: the Paradox of ‘Foreign-Soundingness’” and “The Myth of Literal Translation”, in *Is That a Fish in Your Ear?*, 41-56 and 103-17. Sémelet admits that “une

Loiseleur Deslongchamps speak of “free” and “literal” translation, they are best understood as referring to the “domesticating” approach, which prioritises fluency in the target language and, as argued by Lawrence Venuti, aims to render the work of translation “invisible”,<sup>32</sup> and the “foreignising” approach, which seeks to take the reader abroad through a translation which is a closer reflection of the source language and culture, and is as a result experienced by the reader as unnatural and difficult. Sêmelet’s allegiance to the latter approach is made clear when he states that had he opted for a “free” translation, he would have had less to offer to “ceux qui aiment le goût du terroir dans les productions étrangères” (“those who enjoy encountering local flavours in foreign products”).<sup>33</sup> Desbordes-Valmore’s choice to consult a “literal” translation — despite the warnings against it found both in the *Panthéon Littéraire* volume and in Sêmelet’s own preface — would thus indicate an undeterred commitment to reaching a better informed understanding of Sa’di’s poetry.<sup>34</sup> And her further reading did indeed allow her to write a poem that truly continues Sa’di’s exploration of the limits and powers of language.

Sêmelet’s translation of the parable of the sage and the roses reads as follows:

Un certain sage avait enfoncé sa tête dans le collet de la contemplation, et était submergé dans la mer de l’intuition. Alors qu’il revint de cette extase, un de ses camarades lui dit, par manière de plaisanterie: De ce jardin où tu étais, quel don de générosité nous as-tu apporté? Il répondit: J’avais dans l’esprit que, lorsque j’arriverais au rosier, j’emplirais (*de roses*) un pan de ma robe, (*pour en faire*) un cadeau à mes camarades. Lorsque je fus arrivé, l’odeur des roses m’enivra tellement, que le pan de ma robe m’échappa de la main.

*(A certain sage had stuck his head into the collar of contemplation, and was immersed in the sea of intuition. As he returned from this ecstasy, one of his companion said to him jokingly: From this garden where you were, what generous gift have you brought us? He answered: I had in mind that, upon arriving at the rose tree, I would fill (with roses) a panel of my robe, (to make) a present to my companions. When I arrived, the smell of the roses intoxicated me so much, that the panel of my robe slipped from my hand.)*<sup>35</sup>

While Gaudin’s version had elided that the roses were being carried in the skirts of the sage’s robe, the detail is faithfully rendered here. I would therefore suggest that it was this translation that

---

explication trop littérale peut devenir, en certains cas, un contre-sens” (“a too literal rendition can become, in some cases, a mistranslation”) (Sêmelet, “Préface du Traducteur”, in *Gulistan*, 1-26 (8).

<sup>32</sup> Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator’s Invisibility*.

<sup>33</sup> Sêmelet, “Préface du Traducteur”, 8. Sêmelet’s use of the word “goût” (“taste”) indicates a closeness between his concerns and those of the editor of the *Panthéon Littéraire*, who chose Gaudin because of his better suitability to European “taste”.

<sup>34</sup> As well as explicitly stating that the translation is aimed at students of Persian, Sêmelet includes the following warning in a footnote on the opening page of the translation: “Je préviens les personnes qui voudraient lire cette traduction par agrément ou par curiosité, qu’elle a été faite exclusivement pour celles qui veulent étudier le persan, et que j’ai, pour ainsi dire, calqué les termes de sa rédaction sur les termes du texte; que, par ces motifs, il y a plus de la moitié de cette traduction qui n’est pas supportable à la simple lecture: c’est du français-persan qui ne peut avoir de prix que pour celui qui explique le Gulistan.” (“I warn those people who are planning to read this translation for leisure or to satisfy their curiosity that it has been exclusively written for those who want to learn Persian, and that I have, so to say, based some of my terms on terms in the original text; and, for this reason, over half of this translation cannot be bared by an uneducated reader: this is pure Franco-Persian and is only of use to someone who is explicating the Gulistan.”) Sêmelet, *Gulistan*, 27.

<sup>35</sup> Sêmelet, *Gulistan*, 30. Though the verb “échapper” on its own means to escape, as is the case in Gaudin’s version, the set phrase “échapper de la main” means to lose one’s grip on something.

provided Desbordes-Valmore with the image of the roses being carried in a dress, which is the cornerstone of “Les roses de Saadi”, imbuing the poem’s lyric I with a distinctively feminine character and providing the key metaphor of the knots that cannot contain the roses.<sup>36</sup> The metaphor of the “sea of intuition”, which Sémelet also paraphrases in a note as “the sea of ecstatic vision”,<sup>37</sup> and is absent from Gaudin’s translation, may also have indirectly inspired the far more material sea present in Desbordes-Valmore’s poem. Most significantly, Sémelet’s translation of Sa’di’s parable and the verses that follow it carries across their metapoetic significance, which is lost in Gaudin’s rendition, and, I argue, is a key theme in Desbordes-Valmore’s poem.

### *The Rose and the Written Word*

The rose, which is beautiful but short-lived, is a common image in literature for that which is transient. Indeed, the main continuity between the *Golestān* parable and Desbordes-Valmore’s poem is the use of the failure to bring back roses as a metaphor for the impossibility to preserve and share a past experience through language. In the *Golestān* we are informed from the outset that the experience symbolised by the roses is spiritual ecstasy: the narrative voice sets the scene by telling the reader that the sage was contemplating the divine, so that when the sage’s companion refers to a beautiful garden, we know that he is referring to the sage’s religious bliss. The narrative voice then exposes the underlying meaning of the parable in two short poems of two bayts each, which follow straight on from the sage’s words in direct speech:

ای مرغ سحر عشق ز پروانه بیاموز	کان سوخته را جان شد و آواز نیامد
این مدعیان در طلبش بی خبرانند	کانرا که خبر شد خبری باز نیامد
ای برتر از خیال و قیاس و گمان و وهم	وز هر چه گفته اند و شنیدیم و خوانده ایم
مجلس تمام گشت و به آخر رسید عمر	ما همچنان در اوّل وصف تو مانده ایم

*(O nightingale, learn how to love from the moth,  
Which burned to death without making a sound  
These pretenders know not how to search for Him  
For no news has ever reached us of those who did learn something of Him*

*O You who are higher than any dream, comparison, thought, or fancy  
And all that has been said, and that we heard or read,  
The session is over and the end of our life has arrived  
And we are still only at the beginning of Your description.)*

These verses are closely rendered by Sémelet as follows:

O rossignol (*ô oiseau du matin*)! Apprends l’amour du papillon;  
Parce que brûlé, il a rendu l’âme sans se faire entendre.  
Ces présomptueux sont ignorants dans (*l’art de*) sa recherche;  
Parce que celui qui en a eu connaissance, il n’en est pas revenu une nouvelle.

<sup>36</sup> The word “robe” in French, depending on the context, can refer either to a robe or to a woman’s dress.

<sup>37</sup> “C’est-à-dire, *dans la mer de la vision extatique*.” Note 48 in Sémelet, *Gulistan*, 50.

Ô (*toi qui es*) plus élevé que l'imagination, que le raisonnement, et la pensée, et le sentiment,

Et que tout ce qu'on a dit, (*que*) nous avons entendu et lu!

La séance fut terminée, et notre vie est arrivée à sa fin;

Nous, nous sommes restés tout de même au commencement de ta description.<sup>38</sup>

The image of the moth burning in the flame is an ubiquitous metaphor in Sufi poetry for the dissolution of the self in the face of true love and abandonment to God.<sup>39</sup> Just as the moth catches fire and ceases to be itself to become one with the flame, the sage in his moment of divine ecstasy loses grip of his robe (i.e. his ability to memorise and describe for others what he sees), because the experience is so overwhelming. The third couplet directly addresses the limitations of human intellectual faculties, with the reference to reading — “*har cheh [...] khwāndeh-im*” — raising the fact that this has implications for the written word. Similarly, the final verse’s reference to the challenge of describing God can be understood as pointing to the limitations of the poet, given that praising God is an over-arching theme of Persian (and arguably also European) medieval poetry.<sup>40</sup> This interpretation is all the more encouraged by the fact that the statement appears in verse and not prose: while prose is closely associated with everyday spoken language — and indeed the parable features not only prose narration, but also direct speech — verse in contrast draws attention to itself as an artificial construction and therefore highlights the author’s agency.<sup>41</sup> In this respect, the use of the first-person plural, as well as being understood as a humble I and as a reference to believers, can also be interpreted as a reference to poets, that is, those who seek to do justice to God in their writing. These metapoetic undertones are diminished in Gaudin’s translation, which renders the verse section as another prose paragraph, and translates the final verse as follows: “nous ne sommes encore qu’à la porte et n’avons pu mettre le pied dans ton temple” (“*we are only at the door and have not yet set foot in your temple*”).<sup>42</sup> Sémelet’s translation, on the other hand, preserves the self-reflexive dimension of Sa’di’s verses, which is carried through into “Les roses de Saadi”, a poem that is also concerned with the limitations of poetic language.

While Sa’di makes explicit that the sage’s roses were a metaphor for divine bliss, Desbordes-Valmore leaves the meaning of her roses open to interpretation. As a result, rather than expressing the insufficiency of human language to speak worthily of God, “Les roses de Saadi” portrays language’s more general inability to bridge the divide between self and other, and truly convey one’s subjective experiences. Yves Bonnefoy convincingly suggests that “les ‘ceintures closes’, qui n’ont pas su ‘retenir’, c’est bien [...] l’interposition du langage, dont les ‘nœuds’ seraient ‘trop serrés’ — quelles superbes images! — pour préserver sans la meurtrir durement la plénitude de l’origine” (“*the ‘closed belts’, which could not ‘contain’, are indeed the interposition [...] of language, whose ‘knots’ are too ‘tightly fastened’ — what superb images! — to preserve, without badly damaging it, the plenitude of the original experience*”).<sup>43</sup> It is important to note the violence that Desbordes-Valmore introduces into Sa’di’s image: while the sage of the *Golestān* simply lost hold of the edge of his skirt, in “Les roses de Saadi” the lyric subject’s clothing bursts apart: “Mais j’en avais tant pris dans mes ceintures closes / Que les nœuds trop serrés n’ont pu les contenir. // Les nœuds ont éclaté.” (“*But I had gathered so many inside my closed belts / That the*

---

<sup>38</sup> Sémelet, *Gulistan*, 30.

<sup>39</sup> For a series of notable examples of the moth and flame image in Persian poetry see Encyclopedia Iranica’s entry ‘Candle. ii. Imagery in Poetry’ ( <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/candle-pers> ).

<sup>40</sup> “*Vasf kardan*” can be translated both as “to describe” and “to praise”.

<sup>41</sup> It has indeed been argued that the prosimetrum as a literary genre, through its deliberate alternation of prose and verse, typically exhibits a high degree of authorial self-consciousness. In the context of Persian literature see Julie Scott Meisami, “Mixed Prose and Verse in Medieval Persian Literature”.

<sup>42</sup> Gaudin, *Gulistan* (1789), xxiii; *Panthéon Littéraire*, 554.

<sup>43</sup> Yves Bonnefoy, “Preface”, 20.

*tightly fastened knots were not able to contain them. // The knots burst.*”) Sa‘di’s sage is immediately incapacitated by the perfume of the roses, thereby illustrating the claim that those who have experienced the divine do not tell the story: “*kān rā ke khabar shod khabari bāz nayāmad*” (“*For no news has ever reached us of those who did learn something of Him*”). Desbordes-Valmore’s lyric I, in contrast, makes a valiant attempt at bringing back the roses, even if the enterprise is doomed to failure. The fact that the lyric I persists until the skirts burst thus metaphorically suggests a pushing of language to the limits of its capacity. And though the poem for the most part describes a failure in so far as the roses are lost, Desbordes-Valmore’s lyric I does manage to bring something back: the roses’ perfume, which she is able to share with the poem’s addressee, unlike Sa‘di’s sage who brought nothing back for his companions. Ultimately, then, the enterprise was not to no avail.

“*Les roses de Saadi*” indeed follows an optimistic movement, beginning with that which could not be brought back, and ending on that which remains. The first two stanzas are framed by verbs with the prefix “re”: “*rapporter*” and “*revenir*”, and it is worth noting, though it is unlikely that Desbordes-Valmore would have known this, that the prefix “re” is the French grammatical equivalent of the preposition “*bāz*” in Persian phrasal verbs, which appears both in the prose and verse passages of the *Golestān* quoted above. In the opening verse “*rapporter*” (“*to bring back*”) outlines the lyric subject’s intention. The poem then narrates the loss of the roses, ending on the verb “*revenir*” (“*to come back*”), which is given in the negative form and concludes the second stanza. The third stanza offers a solution to this problem through the poem’s final word “*souvenir*” (“*memory*”), which points back to “*revenir*” with which it shares the infix “*venir*”, as well as its rhyming position. We learn that although the roses themselves, or, metaphorically, the experience itself, cannot be brought back, one may still share something of it. Moreover, the sensuality of the adjective “*odorant*” (“*fragrant*”) in “*l’odorant souvenir*” may be interpreted as an indication of the pleasure that can still be conveyed through language, and in particular poetry, despite its inability to recreate the original experience. In the absence of the roses, the sensuality of their perfume, i.e. of their description through language, is an entirely satisfactory experience in its own right.<sup>44</sup> The “*moi*” of the final verse thus becomes pivotal in so far as it can be read as standing simultaneously for the physical body of the character who filled her dress with roses, and also for the voice of the poet, who through her artful manipulation of language can provide the reader, who is implicitly addressed through the imperative “*Respires-en*”, with a literary experience as pleasurable as smelling roses.

Desbordes-Valmore thus offers her readers a subtle rewriting of Sa‘di, which hinges on one of the *Golestān*’s most universal images and themes: the perishability of the rose and the limitations of language. The ephemerality of all things, the pleasures and limits of the written word, and the attempt to use the written word to bridge the gaps that both time and subjectivity create between individuals, these are neither French nor Iranian concerns: they are the concerns of all humankind, and in particular poets. What is lost in Desbordes-Valmore’s poem is the historically and geographically situated dimension of the *Golestān*, in particular in terms of the religion of the sage in the parable, who is a Sufi. But Desbordes-Valmore’s choice to focus on the universal is both inventive and intelligent, since it avoids falling into stereotyping or hackneyed imitation of the kind critiqued by Said. The lyric I of “*Les roses de Saadi*” is effective because it is that of a nineteenth-century woman and not that of a mock Oriental sage. An illustrative point of contrast would be Victor Hugo’s poem “*Le Derviche*”, the only poem in *Les Orientales* (1829) with any trace of influence from Sa‘di’s *Golestān*, which imitates the genre of the *hekāyat* by telling the story of a conversation between a dervish and a king. The medieval Islamic world of dervishes and kings is clearly far removed from Hugo’s experience, which leaves us with a superficial imitation engaging with Sa‘di’s *Golestān* for its local colour, rather than for its depth of thought or use of imagery.

---

<sup>44</sup> This is where my analysis differs from Bonnefoy’s, according to whom the poem only records a failure of language.

### Reconciling Sa'di's Roses

The seeds for Desbordes-Valmore's solution to the loss symbolized by the roses, which is to say that although poetic language is unable to bring back the past, it is nonetheless able to create something precious in its own right, can be found in the *Golestān*, in a passage that comes closely after the one which Desbordes-Valmore had quoted in her letter to Sainte-Beuve. Sa'di, now a character in the story that he tells,<sup>45</sup> describes how his friend began collecting roses and herbs in the skirts of his robe to take them back to the city.

بامدادان که خاطر باز آمدن بر رای نشستن غالب آمد دیدمش دامنی گل و ریحان و سنبل و ضیمران فراهم آورده و  
رغبت شهر کرده گفتم گل بستان را چنانکه دانی بقایی و عهد گلستان را وفایی نباشد و حکما گفته اند هر چه نباید دلبستگی را  
نشاید. گفتا طریق چیست □ گفتم برای نزهت ناظران و فسحت حاضران کتاب گلستان توانم تصنیف کردن که باد خزان را بر  
ورق او دست تطاول نباشد و گردش زمان عیش ربیعش را بطیش خریف مبدل نکند

از گلستان من ببر ورقی

وین گلستان همیشه خوش باشد

بچه کار آیدت ز گل طبقی

گل همین پنج روز و شش باشد

*(In the morning, when the inclination to return prevailed over our wish to stay, I saw that he had filled the skirts of his robe with roses, fragrant herbs, hyacinths, and sweet basil, with which he was setting out for the city. I said, 'To the rose of the flower-garden there is, as you know, no continuance; nor is there faith in the promise of the rose garden: and the sages have said that we should not fix our affections on that which has no endurance.' He said, 'What then is my course?' I replied, "For the recreation of the beholders and the gratification of those who are present, I am able to compose a book, the Garden of Roses (Golestān), 'whose leaves the rude hand of the blast of autumn cannot affect; and the blitheness of whose spring the revolution of time cannot change into the disorder of the waning year.*

*What use is that bunch of roses to you?  
Take a leaf out of my Golestān (Garden of Roses)  
A rose lives five, six days at the most  
But this Golestān (Garden of Roses) will never fade.)*<sup>46</sup>

Whereas the first parable made an analogy between the sage's inability to carry roses and the insufficiency of human language and by extension poetry, Sa'di now uses the image to the opposite end. The roses are no longer a source of analogy but of contrast, used to describe the longevity, and therefore superiority, of Sa'di's roses, in other words, the pages of the *Golestān*, over the ephemeral roses of the natural world. Desbordes-Valmore's poem offers a nuanced perspective precisely because its nine verses reconcile the different messages that Sa'di conveys on the two occasions in which he uses the image of collecting roses. Acknowledging both the limitations of language and the longevity of literature, "Les roses de Saadi" tells us that although poetry cannot completely preserve an original experience, it is nonetheless valuable both as a memory of an experience and as a source of pleasure in its own right. The idea that Desbordes-Valmore's poetry lives on through time, just as Sa'di announces that his *Golestān* will do, is also carried by the imperative mode in the verse's final line, which makes readers feel as if they are being directly addressed by the lyric I: if the poet is still speaking to reader after reader, this means that her written words are not destined to fade like a rose.

<sup>45</sup> On Sa'di's self-representation see Fatemeh Keshavarz, "In Search of Sadi's Self-Image".

<sup>46</sup> Sa'di, *Gulistan*, pp. 8-9. The prose of the English translation is based on Sa'di, *The Gulistān or, Rose-Garden*, trans. by Edward B. Eastwick, p. 14, and the verse is my own translation. The corresponding passage is found on pages 35-36 of Sémélet's translation.

Although the body of Desbordes-Valmore's poem does not overtly ascribe roses with the metapoetic significance that I have outlined, the reader is pointed in that direction by the poem's title, which tells us that the roses in the poem are not just any roses, but Sa'di's. Sa'di's name, rather than adding exoticism to the piece, is there to encourage readers to search for a meaning beneath the surface of the story and, if they are so inclined, to go as far as reading the poet named in the title. Anyone familiar with the preface of the *Golestān*, and we should remember that it was and remains the most widely translated and disseminated work of Persian literature,<sup>47</sup> would have been able to tell that the title alludes to Sa'di's conceit that the pages of his *Golestān* were "roses". Sa'di's name is not there to signify the otherness of Oriental literature, but to add depth to Desbordes-Valmore's poem, which can be read on several levels. In other words, Desbordes-Valmore's Sa'di is an illustrious poetic predecessor who offers an interpretative key to her verses and is thus far removed from the negative figure of the Oriental identified by Edward Said.

#### *Desbordes-Valmore's Roses*

Having up until now focused on the ways in which "Les roses de Saadi" continues the *Golestān*'s rose metaphor, I now wish to turn to the ways in which Desbordes-Valmore's imagery differs from Sa'di's. Alongside the metapoetic concerns inherited from the preface of the *Golestān*, Desbordes-Valmore also uses the image of the roses, particularly through her references to their perfume and colour, to introduce a certain eroticism into her poem. The poem's erotic dimension is most clear in the imperative "Respires-en sur moi", which calls explicitly on the sense of smell and implicitly on the sense of touch through its reference to the perfume being on the lyric I's body. Desbordes-Valmore's use of a direct address makes the sensuality of the passage leap out at the reader, who is called upon to participate.<sup>48</sup> There is also a latent sexual innuendo in the image of the subject's clothing being unable to contain the roses, which could be interpreted as its inability to hold back a powerful desire. The image of the sea turning red calls to mind human blood, which evokes the female loss of virginity. Moreover, the adjective "enflammé" (*on fire*) is often used to refer to romantic passion, as with for example "des paroles enflammées" for "passionate words".

The erotic subtext of "Les roses de Saadi" becomes unavoidable if we read the poem within the wider context of the self-compiled collection *Poésies inédites*. The poem appears in the collection's opening section which is entitled "Amour" (the other two sections are "Famille" and "Foi"), and the second poem to follow it, "L'entrevue au ruisseau", redeploys much of the same vocabulary and imagery, this time with overtly sexual connotations, the second stanza reading:

Voici ma plus belle ceinture,  
Elle embaume encore de mes fleurs.  
Prends les parfums et les couleurs,  
Prends tout... Je m'en vais sans parure.

(Here is my most beautiful belt,  
It is still full of the perfume from my flowers.  
Take the smells and the colours,  
Take everything... I go without attire.)<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> See Franklin Lewis's entry on the *Gulistan* in Encyclopedia Iranica ( <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/golestan-e-sadi> ).

<sup>48</sup> It is worth noting that Shojā'eddin Shafā, in his Persian translation of the poem renders the verse as: "Agar mikhwāhi, atr ānha rā bebuii" (*If you like, breathe in their perfume*), much in the same way as the translators of the King James' Bible chose to render the opening line of the Song of Songs as "Let him kiss me", rather than the more direct "Kiss me." Shafā, *Irān dar asār-e she'r-e farānseh*, 116.

<sup>49</sup> Desbordes-Valmore, *Oeuvres poétiques*, II, 510.



As well as referring to nudity (“Je m’en vais sans parure”), the poem also refers to a partner who is receiving the lyric subject’s items of clothing: “Sais-tu pourquoi je viens moi-même / Jeter mon ruban sur ton sein?” (“Do you know why I come in person / To throw my ribbon on your breast?”) The relationship between “L’entrevue au ruisseau” and “Les roses de Saadi” is made clear by the repetition of the key noun “ceinture” and verb “embaumer”, which combined with the adverb “encore”, distinctly echoes the verse “ma robe encore en est tout embaumée”. Encountering “L’entrevue au ruisseau” so closely after “Les roses de Saadi”, the reader feels as if the past point in time referred to in the later poem through the word “encore” (“elle embaume encore de mes fleurs”) is to be found in the previous poem and, consequently, that the lyric I and the addressee of “L’entrevue au ruisseau” are the very same lyric I and addressee of “Les roses de Saadi”, whom we read about on the previous page.

And, as if this were not enough, the collection *Poésies inédites* also contains a poem in which the rose is used figuratively to stand for female genitalia: “Une ruelle de Flandre”. As has been shown by Michael Danahy,<sup>50</sup> this poem uses plant metaphors to allude to oral sex:

Errant dans les parfums de tous ces arbres verts,  
Plongeant nos front hardis sous leurs flancs entr’ouverts,  
Nous faisons les doux yeux aux roses embaumées  
Qui nous le rendaient, contentes d’être aimées!

(*Lingering among the perfumes of these green trees  
Plunging our forehead into their opened flanks,  
We made sweet eyes at the fragrant roses  
Who returned it, happy to be loved!*)<sup>51</sup>

Aside from the reference to opened flanks, the sexual reading is also suggested by the verb “aimer”, which in nineteenth-century French could be used to refer to the sexual act, as it is for example in Charles Baudelaire’s erotic poem “Les Bijoux”, published in les *Fleurs du Mal* three years before Desbordes-Valmore’s collection. The fragrant rose (this poem too uses the adjective “embaumées”) thus becomes a *fil rouge*, connecting “Les roses de Saadi” to two more overtly sexual poems in the collection.

Readings that have emphasised the debt of “Les roses de Saadi” to the *Golestān* have sought to downplay the poem’s erotic dimension, starting with Calder’s argument, based on Desbordes-Valmore’s letter to Sainte-Beuve, that the poem should be read as a tribute to Sainte-Beuve and Desbordes-Valmore’s friendship.<sup>52</sup> More recently, Majid Yousefi Behzadi in an article on “Les roses de Saadi” and Leconte de Lisle’s “Les roses d’Espahan” has argued that Desbordes-Valmore’s engagement with Sa’di allows her to portray a “pure” and “virtuous” love, in which the lyric I helps the addressee reach spiritual elevation.<sup>53</sup> In a more measured contribution, Adrianna Paliyenko acknowledges that the symbolism of Desbordes-Valmore’s roses extends beyond divine bliss to encompass “all of the experiences that constitute human life and yet escape our control”.<sup>54</sup> However, she positions herself alongside those critics who have argued against “Les roses de Saadi” as a “love poem” and, basing herself on Desbordes-Valmore’s letter to Sainte-Beuve,

<sup>50</sup> Danahy, “Marceline Desbordes-Valmore et la fraternité des poètes”, 391-92.

<sup>51</sup> Desbordes-Valmore, *Oeuvres poétiques*, II, 524.

<sup>52</sup> The same argument is made by Jeannine Moulin in *Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, édition revue et mise au point*, 97.

<sup>53</sup> Majid Yousefi Behzadi, “Saadi et le symbole de la ‘Rose’ dans le langage poétique de Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (*Les Roses de Saadi*) et de Leconte de Lisle (*Les Roses d’Ispahan*)”, see in particular p. 118.

<sup>54</sup> Adrianna M. Paliyenko, “Between Poetic Cultures: Ancient Sources of the Asian ‘Orient’ in Marceline Desbordes-Valmore and Louise Ackermann”, p. 20.

suggests that Sa‘di’s concern with the divine filters into her writing, thereby displacing the romantic connotations of the sensually fragrant rose.<sup>55</sup> This stance stems from a reaction against the widespread biographical readings of Desbordes-Valmore’s work, which have plagued her poetry since she was first published and are often combined with a degree of sexism.<sup>56</sup> The assumption, already promulgated by contemporaries of Desbordes-Valmore such as Baudelaire, was that women’s writing is “natural” and “spontaneous”, in other words, it was unpolished and autobiographical, lacking the conscious effort characterizing “real” poetry, which was written by men.<sup>57</sup> As I hope to have demonstrated, it is however possible to highlight the poem’s erotic undertones without drawing on Desbordes-Valmore’s biography. To sanitize her verses by removing all traces of female desire is to commit as much of an injustice to her work than to read it as purely autobiographical.<sup>58</sup>

The argument that Sa‘di’s intertextual presence somehow cleanses Desbordes-Valmore’s work of any latent eroticism is also easily refuted. “Les roses de Saadi” is not a pastiche of the preface of Sa‘di’s *Golestān*, but a lyric poem in its own right. Although Desbordes-Valmore keeps Sa‘di’s key imagery, she also alters it, for instance by having the dress break from the strain of the roses. The poem is expressed in modern French, makes no reference to a spiritual or otherworldly dimension, and the landscape evoked has no exotic features. The reader is thus encouraged to picture a local setting and a female lyric I, and assumes that she is addressing another human being, in all likelihood a lover given that she is instructing them to breathe in her smell. “Les roses de Saadi” is therefore clearly no longer about a sage and his companion, which raises the question: why should one assume that it bears no traces of earthly love? Moreover, the rose had already taken on various meanings in Sa‘di’s preface, not all of which referred to a spiritual dimension. Given the rose’s polysemy in Sa‘di’s work, it seems disingenuous to claim that because Desbordes-Valmore was inspired by Sa‘di, her roses could only have a spiritual meaning. Finally, to present earthly love and divine love as mutually exclusive is to impose a dichotomy that held no currency in medieval poetry. Erotic language is frequently used in both European and Persian mystical literature, and earthly love, rather than a distraction, can be the first step towards divine love.<sup>59</sup>

We might ask: what did it mean for a nineteenth-century French poem to have a female lyric subject and to engage with Persian literature’s most famous export? As a woman writing a poem inspired by Sa‘di, Desbordes-Valmore was an outsider in three ways. First, in the context of lyric poetry, Desbordes-Valmore was constantly marginalized by canonical male poets. I already cited Baudelaire, but another important insight into her status as a poet in relation to her male contemporaries is offered by Alphonse de Lamartine. In his poem “A Madame Desbordes-Valmore”, Lamartine portrays himself, the quintessential male poet, sailing on a great ship (verses 16-17), characterized by its phallic “haut mâ” (*tall mast*); Desbordes-Valmore, in contrast sails on a

---

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* p. 19.

<sup>56</sup> On Desbordes-Valmore’s reception as a ‘woman poet’, see Eliane Jasenas, *Marceline Desbordes-Valmore devant la critique*.

<sup>57</sup> Baudelaire, “III. Marceline Desbordes-Valmore”, in “Réflexions sur quelques-uns de mes contemporains”, in *Œuvres complètes*, II, 145-49.

<sup>58</sup> Edward K. Kaplan offers a nuanced overview of Desbordes-Valmore’s poetic oeuvre, suggesting that she judiciously alternated self-effacement and self-assertion, being prepared to go along with biographical or sexist interpretations of her work if these could aid her career. Kaplan also acknowledges the erotic undertones of “Les roses de Saadi” as follows: “Images of innocence, we realize, can be imbued with carnal and turbulent love, just as sexuality can retain its maternal virtue.” Edward K. Kaplan, “The Voices of Marceline Desbordes-Valmore: Deference, Self-Assertion, Accountability”, 267.

<sup>59</sup> In Regina Psaki’s pithy words, “sex can inhabit the sacred”. Regina Psaki, “Love for Beatrice: Transcending Contradiction in the Paradiso”, 119. The richest example of this in the Persian context is Hāfez. See Leonard Lewisohn, ed. *Hafiz and the Religion of Love*.

frail raft (“Esquif”), characterized by its humble sails (“humble voile”) — one should note that the French word “voile” also means “veil”, a characteristically female item of clothing.<sup>60</sup> The reference to the sea in “Les roses de Saadi” could thus be interpreted as referring back to Lamartine’s comparison of his own poetry to Desbordes-Valmore’s. While for Lamartine writing poetry is represented as a form of domination — “Longue course à l’heureux navire / [...] La vaste mer est son empire” (*May the happy ship sail far/ [...] The vast sea is its empire*),<sup>61</sup> in Desbordes-Valmore we have an image of dissolution. Reading the roses as an image for poetry, in continuation with the *Golestān*, Desbordes-Valmore can be understood as representing poetry not as something that breaks through the waves in a powerful and controlled manner, but as something that falls into the water and allows itself to be carried away: “Les roses envolées / Dans le vent, à la mer s’en sont allées. / Elles ont suivi l’eau pour ne plus revenir”. In doing so she breaks away from the image of poetry as a sea vessel and its masculine connotations.<sup>62</sup>

The second way in which Desbordes-Valmore writes as an outsider is from the perspective of the academic discipline of Oriental studies and its dissemination in literature by non-academics. The essays and translations available to Desbordes-Valmore were all the work of male Orientalists and the poets famous for engaging with Oriental literature (Goethe and Hugo) were also male. It would only be later in the century that women authors such as Jane Dieulafoy and Judith Gautier would stake a claim to this field. Thirdly, canonical Persian poetry, as it was received in nineteenth-century France, was entirely the work of male authors. Desbordes-Valmore was rewriting Sa’di not only in terms of cultural setting, but also in terms of the lyric I’s gender: as we saw above, the use of modern French and the neutral setting lead the reader to assume that the “robe” refers to a woman’s dress and not to a male sage’s robe. Desbordes-Valmore is thus ultimately expanding the period’s horizons for women’s writing, so that it may include lyric poetry, which as Danahy has shown was considered a male genre,<sup>63</sup> engagements with Oriental sources, and the appropriation and redeployment of canonical male voices, in this case, that of Sa’di. By rewriting Sa’di’s metaphor in a feminine voice Desbordes-Valmore was thus tearing down the wall between the masculine and the feminine realms, as well as that between what was perceived as Western and what was perceived as Oriental.

It has been argued in the field of travel writing that while Western women could use colonial ideology to consider themselves superior to local Middle-Eastern populations, they were at the same time the inferior “other” of Western men, which meant that they had something in common with the populations that these men colonised (Bénédite Monicat, 1996). The intersection of the two hierarchies (gender and Orientalism) thus gave women travel writers a unique perspective, which could lead them to support or challenge one or both of these binaries. One might venture that something akin to this is happening in the case of Desbordes-Valmore, who is indirectly questioning both the exclusion of women from poetry and the sense of difference or separation

---

<sup>60</sup> Lamartine’s poem and Desbordes-Valmore’s response poem ‘À M. Alphonse de Lamartine’ (both published in the collection *Les Pleurs*, 1833) can be found in Desbordes-Valmore, *Œuvres complètes*, II, pp. 818-820 and I, pp. 224-26 respectively. (The Lamartine quotations are taken from II, 818.) The poetic exchange is analyzed by Kaplan, along with other poems addressed by male poets to Desbordes-Valmore.

<sup>61</sup> Desbordes-Valmore, *Œuvres complètes* II, 818.

<sup>62</sup> The metaphor of the sea journey for the composition of poetry dates back to classical authors (see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, 128–30). Lamartine’s opposition of a great ship leading the way and Desbordes-Valmore’s small raft may also have been inspired by Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, specifically *Paradiso* II, verses 1-15. (The *Divine Comedy* inspired several French translations and was popular among nineteenth-century French poets, as has been studied by Michael Pitwood.)

<sup>63</sup> Danahy, “Marceline Desbordes-Valmore et la fraternité des poètes”, 388-89.

between European and Persian poetry, something that Victor Hugo had certainly failed to do in *Les Orientales*, despite the ambitious agenda of the collection's preface.

### Conclusion

"Les roses de Saadi" is a poem in which classical Persian literature and modern French lyric come together to form one coherent whole, doing away with the rigid categories of "Western" and "Oriental" and "masculine" and "feminine". Marceline Desbordes-Valmore would have first become aware of Sa'di within the context of the Romantic vogue for Oriental poetry spear-headed in France by Victor Hugo. However, an inquiry into her sources indicates that Desbordes-Valmore's interest in Sa'di was more than superficial. Not content with the "palatable" translations offered by anthologies such as the *Panthéon Littéraire*, she sought to reach a closer understanding of Sa'di through what was at the time called a "literal" translation. Her poem's subtle treatment of the pitfalls and pleasures of language combines two passages from the preface of the *Golestān*, engaging in particular with the metapoetic dimension of Sa'di's text. At the same time, Desbordes-Valmore recasts Sa'di's image in a modern setting hinging on a female lyric I. In doing so, she does not engage with Sa'di as a representative of an inherently other or Oriental perspective, but as an author who shared the same concerns as hers: namely, the parts of our experiences that can and cannot be conveyed through language; the pleasure that literature can bring; and the longevity of the written word over natural time. By exploring these shared concerns, Desbordes-Valmore asserted women poets and Persian poets' place in the French nineteenth-century literary sphere. Moreover, the imagery of dissolution that she inherited from the preface of the *Golestān* allowed her to redefine the image of the poet as a virile and dominating subject, which had been promulgated by the likes of Baudelaire and Lamartine.

It is no coincidence in my view that the transcending of the temporal, linguistic, religious, and gendered differences between Sa'di and Desbordes-Valmore is made possible by a lyric poem, rather than a work of prose. Poetry through its polysemic nature has the flexibility to include different perspectives without placing them in opposition. Poetry, moreover, thrives on intertextual dialogue, with poets of all traditions constantly building on what has been written before them through both open and veiled allusions. Finally, the predominance of the first person in lyric poetry is not to be underestimated. While works of prose of the kind examined by Said in *Orientalism* involve a dominant Western I describing a passive Oriental object of study in the third person, Desbordes-Valmore's lyric I identifies with Sa'di's lyric I. Poetic treatments of the Orient should therefore not be discarded as frivolous Western fantasies, but considered in terms of their potential to tackle cultural difference in a manner that is not possible in prose. Though not all nineteenth-century French poets were as successful as Desbordes-Valmore in liberating themselves from cliché, a closer examination of the status of Persian poetry in French nineteenth-century literary culture may nonetheless help us piece together a different history of Orientalism, one framed in terms of identification, translation, and adaptation, and not only imperialist visions of the exotic.

## Bibliography

Aravamudan, Srinivas, *Enlightenment Orientalism: Resisting the Rise of the Novel*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Barbier de Meynard, Charles Adrien Casimir, *La Poésie en Perse: Leçon d'ouverture faite au Collège de France, le 4 décembre 1876*. Paris, 1877.

Baudelaire, Charles, *Œuvres complètes* 2 vols. Ed. by Claude Pichois. Paris: Gallimard, 1975-76.

Bellos, David, *Is That a Fish in Your Ear? The Amazing Adventure of Translation*. London: Penguin, 2011.

Bevilacqua, Alexander, *The Republic of Arabic Letters: Islam and the European Enlightenment*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2018.

Bhatti, Anil “... ’Zwischen zwei Welten schwebend’ .... Zu Goethes Fremdheitsexperiment im *West-Östlichen Divan*” in *Goethe. Neue Ansichten – neue Einsichten*, ed. by Hans-Jörg Knobloch and Helmut Koopmann. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2007: 103-22.

Bhatti, Anil, and Kimmich, Dorothee, ed. *Similarity: A Paradigm for Culture Theory*. New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2018.

Bonnefoy, Yves, “Preface”, in Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, *Poésies*. Edited By Yves Bonnefoy. Paris: Gallimard, 1983: 7-34.

Bonnerot, Olivier, *La Perse dans la littérature et la pensée françaises au XVIIIe siècle: de l'image au mythe*. Paris: Champion-Slatkine, 1988.

Brancaforte, Elio, “Persian Words of Wisdom Travel to the West: Seventeenth-Century European Translations of Sa‘di’s *Gulistan*”, *Daphnis* 45 (2017): 450-472.

Calder, A., “Notes on the Meaning and Form of Marceline Desbordes-Valmore’s ‘Les roses de Saadi’”, *The Modern Language Review* 70: 1 (1975), 71-74.

Chételat, E. J., ed. *Les Occidentales ou Lettres critiques sur les Orientales de M. Victor Hugo*. Paris: Hauteceur-Martinet, 1829.

Curtius, Ernst Robert, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by Willard R. Trask. New York: Pantheon Books, 1953.

Dabashi, Hamid. *Persophilia: Persian Culture on the Global Scene*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015.

Danahy, Michael, “Marceline Desbordes-Valmore et la fraternité des poètes”, *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 19:3 (1991), 386-93.

Desbordes-Valmore, Marceline. *Les Oeuvres poétiques* 2 vols. Edited by Marc Bertrand. Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble, 1973.

Gail, Marzieh. *Persia and the Victorians*. London: Allen and Unwin, 1951.

Gaudin, Abbé. *Essai historique sur la législation de la Perse, précédé de la Traduction complète du Jardin des Roses de Sady*. Paris, 1789.

Gautier, Théophile, *Émaux et Camées*. Paris : Didier, 1852.

‘Goethe et l’Orient : Le divan occidental-Oriental’, special issue of *Études germaniques* 60:2 (2005).

Hadidi, Javād, “Peydāyesh va gostāresh-e Irānshenāsi”, in *Az Sa’di be Aragon: ta’sir-e adabi’āt-e fārsi dar adabi’āt-e farānseh*. Tehran: Markāz-e Nashr-e Dāneshgāhi, 1994: 214-47.

Hayati Ashtiani, Karim, PhD dissertation: “Les relations littéraires entre la France et la Perse de 1829 à 1897”. Université Lumière Lyon II, 2004.

Hugo, Victor, *Les Orientales*. Paris: Bossange, 1829.

Irwin, Robert, “An Enquiry into the Nature of a Certain Twentieth-Century Polemic”, in *For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies*. London: Penguin, 2006: 277-309.

Jasenas, Eliane, *Marceline Desbordes-Valmore devant la critique*. Geneva: Droz, 1962.

Jones, William, “Traité sur la poesie Orientale”, in *Histoire de Nader Chah*. London: Elsmly, 1770: 231-314.

Kaplan, Edward K., “The Voices of Marceline Desbordes-Valmore: Deference, Self-Assertion, Accountability”, *French Forum* 22: 3 (1997): 261-77.

Keshavarz, Fatemeh, “‘Much Have I Roamed through the World’: In Search of Sadi’s Self-Image”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26:3 (1994): 465-75.

Larcher, Pierre, “Autour des *Orientales*: Victor Hugo, Ernest Fouinet et la Poésie arabe archaïque”, in *Orientalisme savant, Orientalisme littéraire: sept essais sur leur connexion*. Arles: Actes Sud, 2017: 51-89.

Lewisohn, Leonard, ed. *Hafiz and the Religion of Love in Classical Persian Poetry*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2010.

Loiseleur Deslongchamps, A., “Notice sur le Gulistan et sur la vie de Saadi”, *Panthéon Littéraire*, 135 vols. Paris: 1835-45, LVIII: 551-52.

Maillard, Christine and Tafazoli, Hamid. *Persien im Spiegel Deutschlands. Konstruktionsvarianten von Persien-Bildern in der deutschsprachigen Literatur vom 18. bis in das 20. Jahrhundert*. Strasbourg: Presses universitaires de Strasbourg, 2018.

Monicat, Bénédicte, *Itinéraires de l’écriture au féminin: voyageuses du 19e siècle*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996.

Moulin, Jeannine, *Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, édition revue et mise au point*. Paris: Éditions Seghers, 1983.

- Paliyenko, Adrianna M., "Between Poetic Cultures: Ancient Sources of the Asian 'Orient' in Marceline Desbordes-Valmore and Louise Ackermann", *L'Esprit Créateur* 56: 3 (2016): 14-27.
- Perrin, Jean-François, *L'Orientale allégorie: le conte Oriental au XVIIIe siècle en France (1704-1774)*. Paris: Champion, 2015.
- Pitwood, Michael. *Dante and the French Romantics*. Geneva: Droz, 1985.
- Psaki, Regina, "Love for Beatrice: Transcending Contradiction in the Paradiso", in *Dante for the New Millennium*. Edited by Teodolinda Barolini and H. Wayne Storey. New York: Fordham University Press, 2003, 115–30.
- Raffin, Sandrine, "Les Orientales. La Réception critique en 1829", in *Victor Hugo 5. Autour des "Orientales"*, *La Revue des Lettres modernes*. Edited by Claude Millet. Paris-Caen: Minard, 2002: 107-38.
- Saʿdi, "Gulistan ou le jardin des roses, traduit du Persan de Saadi". Translated by Abbé Gaudin. Edited by A. Loiseleur Deslongchamps. In *Panthéon Littéraire*, 135 vols (Paris: 1835-45), LVIII: 553-61.
- Saʿdi, *The Gulistan or, Rose-Garden*, trans. By Edward B. Eastwick, 2nd ed (London: Routledge, 2000 [1880]).
- Saʿdi, *Golestān*. Edited by Mohammad Javād Mashkur. Tehran: Eqbāl, 1963.
- Said, Edward, *Orientalism*. London: Penguin, 1985 [1978].
- Scott Meisami, Julie, "Mixed Prose and Verse in Medieval Persian Literature", in *Prosimetrum: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Narrative in Prose and Verse*. Edited by Joseph Harris and Karl Reichl. Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1997: 295-319.
- Schwab, Raymond. *La Renaissance orientale*. Paris: Payot, 1950.
- Shafā, Shojāʾ al-Din, *Irān dar asār-hā-ye sheʾr-e farānseh*. Tehran: Ketābkhāneh-ye Ibn-e Sinā, 1954.
- Spoelberch de Lovenjoul, *Sainte-Beuve inconnu*. Paris: Plon, 1901.
- Tafazoli, Hamid. *Der deutsche Persien-Diskurs: Von der frühen Neuzeit bis in das neunzehnten Jahrhundert*. Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2007.
- Tafazoli, Hamid, "Heterotopie als Entwurf poetischer Raumgestaltung", in *Aussenraum — Mitraum — Innenraum: Hereotopien in Kultur und Gesellschaft*, ed by Hamid Tafazoli and Richard T. Gray. Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2012: 35-59.
- Venuti, Lawrence, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. 2nd Edition. London: Routledge, 2008.
- Yee, Jennifer, *The Colonial Comedy: Imperialism in the French Realist Novel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Yousefi Behzadi, Majid, “Saadi et le symbole de la ‘Rose’ dans le langage poétique de Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (*Les Roses de Saadi*) et de Leconte de Lisle (*Les Roses d’Ispahan*)”, *Recherches en Langue et Littérature Françaises Revue de la Faculté des Lettres* (Tabriz University), Année 9, n°15: 109-23.